

Sketch

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Pacific Paradise

Robert Stephens*

*Iowa State College

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Pacific Paradise

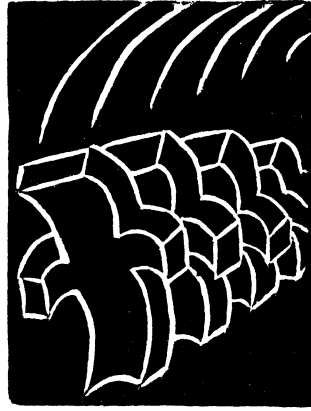
Robert Stephens

Abstract

Like snow that heat can not melt, bleached white coral tortures our tired eyes...

Pacific Paradise

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LIKE snow that heat can not melt, bleached white coral tortures our tired eyes. A tropical sun, mocking the pitiful efforts of shattered palms to yield shade, rests its gigantic weight on our exhausted shoulders, while the shimmering heat evaporates our strength and initiative. The flat monotony of the Pacific stretches beyond sight, and its vastness magnifies the scene.

A deafening silence shrouds the beach. The living are as still as the dead that are there. Sweat-streaked faces read of home, but no words form when lips move. Beneath steel helmets peer glazed eyes, offset by tanned fatigue. Glazed minds in young bodies. Old thoughts, but no words. Even the air is motionless as if the wind fears to raise its voice. The island is a close morgue, rising from a thousand miles of water. That very ocean seems to hold its breath, and the waves are hushed as they trip over hidden reefs and fall at our feet. White crosses grow in regimented rows. White crosses—the mute, singular crop from white coral.

This is Peleliu, a blinding white expanse in the middle of nowhere. No clouds to mar our azure roof. No clouds to hide the crushing sun. No clouds to bring rain and cool our parched home. Only the pressure of heat and glare to trample our minds, our bodies, and our souls. No future. No hope. Only tomorrow with its sun and heat. Only the coral glare.